



**File Code:** 1950

**Date:** June 21, 2001

**Subject:** Transmission Line Special Use Permits for Continued Use  
of Existing Pipelines

Dear Friends and Partners of Midewin:

The Forest Service at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie (Midewin) is proposing to issue two special use permits authorizing the continued use of buried transmission pipelines located along a portion of the Prairie's eastern and southern borders. During this public comment period, we are providing you with specific information on the proposed project, and invite you to send us your detailed comments.

The scope of this proposal involves issuing special use permits to Trans Montaigne Pipeline, Inc. for approximately 6 miles of continued use, and to Mobil Pipeline Corporation for approximately 1800 feet of continued use. The locations of these pipeline corridors are shown on the attached map.

Currently, in the existing buried pipeline corridor, there are seven pipelines in use. Of the seven, five pipelines have open-ended easements that are not subject to special use authorization or an expiration date. The remaining two pipelines for Trans Montaigne and Mobil are located within this existing, encumbered pipeline corridor. Use of buried pipelines within this corridor has not changed since authorized and no change in the physical environment or facilities is proposed. Relocating two of the seven buried pipelines is not a feasible alternative to continued use, as relocation could cause environmental impacts, not only to the existing corridor, but also to areas selected for their relocation.

We propose to issue the special use authorizations to Trans Montaigne Pipeline, Inc. and Mobil Pipeline Corporation to allow the continuation of uninterrupted service of furnishing crude oil and petroleum products to the greater Chicago area. Starting during World War II, the U.S. Army permitted these transmission pipelines within the former Joliet Army Ammunitions Plant through easements. The easement lands, along with other U.S. Army lands, were transferred to the USDA Forest Service in 1996, today administered as Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, pursuant to the Illinois Land Conservation Act of 1995. Continued use of these pipelines will contribute to the USDA Forest Service mission to provide multiple-use goods and services, while managing the land and water resources to conserve and enhance native fish, wildlife, and plant populations and their habitats.

With this letter, we are initiating the procedures required by the Forest Service to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). You have been contacted as part of the public involvement process. Your comments on the proposed action will help complete the environmental evaluation of the proposed activity.



Please consider the following specific questions and respond to any or all of them in writing by no later than July 23, 2001.

1. Is there any information about the project area (Midewin) that you believe is important in context of the proposed activity?
2. For you or the group you represent, what are the potential effects of this proposal that you are particularly concerned about?
3. Are there reasonable alternative ways for the Forest Service to develop and analyze environmental effects in order to address the rationale for conducting this activity?
4. Are there environmental effects, which you feel are important and would like to have addressed in our analysis? If so, please include your rationale for why they should be analyzed.

We will be taking the comments received during this public input period for consideration in our analysis of the proposed project as well as considering the analysis of other environmental effects. As the Prairie Supervisor, I will be the deciding officer for this project.

At this time I do not believe that the proposed authorization for continued use of buried transmission pipelines will have a significant impact on the environment, based on similar activities conducted in the past. However, we will be analyzing the proposed project's effects on water, air, soil, sensitive plant and animal species, federally threatened and endangered species, and cultural resources in the area prior to making a final determination.

If you have any questions about the proposed activity, please feel free to write Enid Erickson, Environmental Coordinator, at the address above, email [eerickson@fs.fed.us](mailto:eerickson@fs.fed.us) or call at (815) 423-6370. Please submit your comments by July 23, 2001.

Thank you for your interest in activities at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie.

FRANK KOENIG  
Prairie Supervisor

attachment: Map